

**OLD ENGLISH TEST BOOKS.  
JACKE OF DOVER'S, QUEST OF  
INQUIRIE, OR, HIS PRIVY SEARCH  
FOR THE VERIEST FOOLE IN  
ENGLAND, 1604**

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**W. CAREW HAZLITT**

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Bound

Old English Jest Books.

JACKE OF DOVER'S

"Quest of Inquiritie,"

OR

HIS PRIVY SEARCH FOR THE VERIEST FOOLK IN  
ENGLAND.

1604.

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REPRINTED FROM THE RARE ORIGINAL,

*And Edited, with Introduction and Notes,*

BY

W. CAREW HAZLITT.

LONDON:

1866.

JACK OF DOVER,

*Jack of Dover, His Quest of Inquirie, or His Privy Search for the Veriest Foole in England. London, Printed for William Ferbrand, and are to be sold in Popes Head Alley, over against the Taverns doore, neare the Exchange. 1604. 4°.*

*The Merry Tales of Jacke of Dover; or his Quest, &c. (as in the former ed.) Lond. 1615, 4°.*

Both impressions are in the Bodleian Library.

It is extremely probable that of this little tract, several editions were published. On the 3rd August, 1601, Wm. Ferbrand had a licence to print "the second parte of Jack of Dover;" but the edition now reprinted is the oldest that is known to be extant.

It is evident that the term *Jack of Dover* is used here quite in a different sense from the one in which it is found in Chaucer (Prologue to the Cook's Tale). "Jack of Dover" was edited in 1842 for the Percy Society.

The title of "Quest of Inquirie," was perhaps recommended by the popularity of a tract, which appeared in 1595 under the title of.

"A Quest of Inquirie,  
For Women to know,  
Whether the tripe-wife were trimmed  
By Doll, yea or no.

Gathered by Oliver Oat-Meale."

Henry Fitzgeffrey, in his *Satyres*, ed. 1620, alludes to *Jack of Dover, his Quest of Inquiry*, in a passage in which he is describing the popular literature of the day.

## JACKE OF DOVERS QUEST OF INQUIRIE.

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WHEN merry Jacke of Dover had made his privie search for the Foole of all Fooles, and making his inquirie in most of the principall places in England, at his returne home was adjudged to be the foole himselfe: but now, wearied with the motley coxcombe, he hath undertaken in some place or other to finde out a verier foole than himselfe. But first of all comming to London he went into Paules church where, walking very melancholy in the middle ile with captaine Thingut and his fellowes, he was invited to dine at duke Humphries ordinarie where, amongst many other good stomackes that repayed to his bountifull feast, there came in a whole jury of pennilesse poets who, being fellowes of a merry disposition (but as necessary in a common-wealth as a candle in a straw-bed) hee accepted of their company; and as from poets commeth all kind of foolerie, so he hoped by their good directions to find out this Foole of all Fooles



so long lookt for. So thinking to passe away the dinner time with some pleasant chat, least (being overcloyde with too many delicates) they should surfet, he discovered to them his merry meaning, who being glad of so good an occasion of mirth, instead of a cup of sacke and sugar for disjestion, these men of litle wit began to make inquirie and to search for this aforesayde foole, thinking it a deede of charitie to ease him of so great a burthen as his motley coxcombe was, and because such weake braines as are now resident almost in every place might take benefite hereat. In this manner began the inquirie.

*The Foole of Herforde.*

UPON a time (quoth one of the jurie) it was my chaunce to be in the cittie of Herforde, when, lodging in an inn, I was tolde of a certain silly witted gentleman there dwelling, that wold assuredly beleeve all things that he heard for a truth, to whose house I went upon a sleeveles arrand, and finding occasion to be acquainted with him, I was well entertained, and for three dayes space had my bed and boord in his house, where amongst many other fooleries, I, being a traveller, made him beleeve that the steeple in

Burndwood<sup>1</sup> in Essex sayled in one night as far as Callis in Fraunce, and afterward returned againe to his proper place. Another time I made him beleeve that in the forest of Sherwood in Nottinghamshire were seene five hundred of the king of Spaines gallies, which went to besiedge Robbinhoodes Well, and that fourty thousand schollers with elderne squirts performed such a peece of service, as they were all in a manner broken and overthrowne in the forrest. Another time I made him beleeve that Westminster hall, for suspition of treason, was banished for ten years into Staffordshire. And last of all, I made him beleeve that a tinker should be bayted to death at Canterbury for getting two and twenty children in a yeere: whereupon, to proove me a lyer, he tooke his horse and rode thither; and I, to verrifie him a foole, tooke my horse and rode hither. Well, quoth Jack of Dover, this in my minde was pretty foolerie, but yet the Foole of all Fooles is not heere found that I looke for.

*The Foole of Huntington.*

AND it was my chaunce (quoth another of the jurie) upon a time to be at Huntington, where

(1) *i.e.* Brentwood, which is equivalent in meaning to the word in the text. The place was formerly known also as *Burntwood* or *Burndwood*.

I heard tell of a simple shoemaker there dwelling, who having two litle boyes, whom he made a vaunt to bring up to learning, the better to maintaine themselves when they were men ; and having kept them a yeere or two at schoole, he examined them, saying : my good boy (quoth he to one of them), what doest thou learne ? and where is thy lesson ? Oh, father, said the boy, I am past grace. And where art thou ? quoth he to the other boy, who likewise answered, that he was at the divell and all his workes. Now, Lord blesse us, quoth the shoemaker, whither are my children learning ? the one is already past grace, and the other at the divell and all his workes : whereupon he tooke them both from schoole, and set them to his owne occupation. Well, quoth Jacke of Dover, this in my mind was pretty foolery, but yet the Foole of Fooles is not heere found that I looke for.

*The Foole of Bedford.*

NOT many yeeres ago (sayd another of the jurie), it was my chauce to be at Bedford, where, in the time of my continuance there, the wives of that same place strove to exceed one another in brave apparell, and shee deemed herselfe the best woman that could get her garments made of the